



The Honorable Danny Davis
Chairman, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Worker and Family Support

Dear Chairman Davis:

Thank you for holding the March 7, 2019 hearing **Leveling the Playing Field for Workers: Challenges and Opportunities**.

Please accept the following statement to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Worker and Family Support to be inserted into the record for your March 7, 2019 hearing.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anne B. Mosle".

Anne B. Mosle,
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Chairman Davis, Ranking Member Walorski, and other Members,

My name is Anne Mosle and I am a Vice President at the Aspen Institute and Executive Director of Ascend at the Aspen Institute.

Ascend at the Aspen Institute is the national hub for breakthrough ideas and collaborations that move children and their parents toward educational success, financial security, and health and well-being. Our North Star is increased economic security for the millions of families currently living up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level. We focus on identifying and supporting leaders and nonprofit organizations aligned with that North Star. In 2014, we launched the Ascend Network, which is currently comprised of over 310 organization, serving approximately 3.5 million families annually across 46 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and Guam. With its diverse mix of policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and philanthropists, the Ascend Network represents the leading edge of programmatic, policy, and research efforts focused on a two-generation (2Gen) approach: serving children and parents simultaneously for stronger and better family outcomes.

One of the five core principles of a 2Gen approach is engaging families in program and policy design, implementation, and evaluation. Ascend has a deep commitment to engaging and elevating the voices of families in policy and program conversations and a history of bringing together leaders who may never have been offered a seat at the same table. Undergirding all of Ascend's work is a commitment to listen to families and ensure their perspectives and experience inform program and policy design. Policies provide the scaffolding and structures that support parents, but parents themselves fuel and create their family's successful path toward economic security.

Parent voices and experiences matter, and it is time for a fundamental recognition, including in our policies, of the role parents play in their own economic success. By listening to parent voice and elevating partnerships with parents, our policies and practitioners can become more effective in serving families with outcomes for both children and parents as a powerful metric and guide.

We commend the Subcommittee for asking Tameka Henry and Yvette McKinnie, to lead off the Subcommittee's exploration of the challenges and opportunities facing families as they seek to be responsible, loving, and supportive parents, grandparents, and family members while meeting the obligations of their jobs and providing for their families' economic security. We are especially proud that Tameka Henry, who is a Parent Advisor for Ascend's Postsecondary Success for Parents Initiative, shared her story with the Subcommittee. Tameka has been so generous in sharing with Ascend her experiences and expertise as a parent navigating the precarious balance of work and family and her insights have informed our work and that of the Ascend Network.

Closely related to the Subcommittee's focus, fueled by an investment by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in 2017, Ascend launched another effort – the Aspen Family Prosperity Innovation Community: a group of extraordinarily talented and deeply committed leaders working together to identify new ways to ensure families in the United States can thrive. This learning and action community works together to develop bold strategies that strengthen parents' employment, economic security, and health and well-being with a focus on family-supportive policies.

As you know, times are changing rapidly for families—our households, work and the workforce do not look like they did just a decade ago. Challenges and barriers for parents continue to grow – skyrocketing

costs of health care and child care, unpredictable scheduling combined with a lack of flexibility at the workplace, and less time at home. Working parents must balance their budget and time across an ever-changing landscape of needs: from caring for themselves, their children, and older family members, to affording quality child care and paying household bills. The same holds true for grandparents caring for their children's children. Removing barriers so families can care for their loved ones requires us to rethink and update the policies and supports needed for all working parents to keep up with the realities of a changing workforce and economy.

There are many family-supportive policies that policymakers and businesses can implement to help ensure that families have access to the time and resources needed to thrive. Your hearing has highlighted a few— such as paid family and medical leave, sick leave, quality affordable child care, health insurance, mental health and lactation supports for new mothers, and federal levers such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), among others.

The Aspen Family Prosperity Innovation Community (Family Prosperity) is bringing together policy, practice, business, research, and community leaders so that we may look beyond our current options so that we can better understand a fuller menu of leading-edge ways policies and supports like these can improve economic and health opportunities and outcomes for families in the United States, especially those with low incomes.

With that, as noted earlier, we must fully recognize that America's workforce has changed dramatically over several decades – almost half of all children are being raised in households in which all parents work full-time, about twice the rate of 1968. We must reimagine the policies and solutions that ensure America is tapping the full talents, gifts, and potential of our nation's greatest asset: our people.

What is meaningful work? What does it mean for a family to thrive? There are certain conditions in and outside of work that lay the economic, health, and educational foundation for families to prosper that are often not met. Government entities often silo their support for child care, education, and career development instead of treating these as equally vital in improving outcomes for families. Many employers do not offer paid leave for employees that need to take time off to care for newborn, sick, or elderly family members. Parents who are paid low wages are often subject to punitive federal and state policies that are intended to help families struggling to get by, but in reality, place barriers between them and higher education and new careers.

Thriving is about having access to affordable, high-quality early learning and child care supports. It is the opportunity to earn postsecondary credentials, so your children have a path to a better future. It is the ability to take paid time off to care for a loved one. Above all, we believe work should be infused with dignity.

And we know that thriving families and a diverse workforce also translates into an economically thriving country. A prosperous America requires a new vision of the future of work that values how family, health, and a new learning landscape are driving opportunities for economic growth for our communities, cities, and country.

While the definition of “work” may vary by person and by industry, it is frequently colored by preconceived notions. We must change the narrative around work to reflect an alignment of what

families need to the workforce America needs so we can truly transform policies, systems, and practices to support families. And as one of our Family Prosperity Partners said, “Stability is not enough. It’s got to be prosperity, it’s got to be thriving.”

That is what we strive to accomplish with the Aspen Family Prosperity Innovation Community. Last May we convened the Family Prosperity Community, including Family Prosperity Partners from primarily national policy organizations – American Enterprise Institute, Center for Public Justice, Family Values @ Work and the Center for Law and Social Policy, Legal Aid at Work, National Partnership for Women and Families, and Urban Institute – in Aspen, where we talked about the future of work in the public and private sectors, and how crucial issues like child care and paid family leave are to working families.

Our innovation community discussed a range of new propositions, from the engagement of the sacred sector employers to a new social insurance program to provide paid family and medical leave. But our conversations have just begun.

Family prosperity, true family economic security, is our powerful shared North Star, guiding us to work together to change the narrative, shape the investment flow and create a strategy for a future of work that taps the potential of all Americans.

We need to imagine the next era of possibility for family-supportive policies. We welcome the opportunity to work with the Subcommittee to identify ways policymakers can invest in human potential that will pay dividends for generations to come and grow our economy in ways we have only begun to imagine.